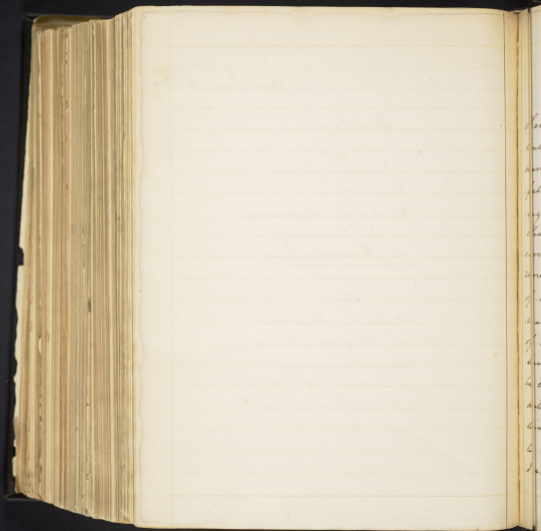


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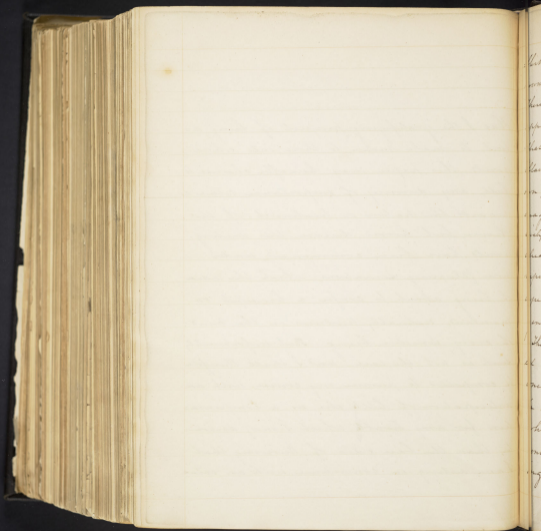
An Essay
on
Acutezgia, for the
Degree of
Doctor of Medicines
in the University
of Pennsylvania.

By
William Smith.
of Virginia.

January 13th 1829.

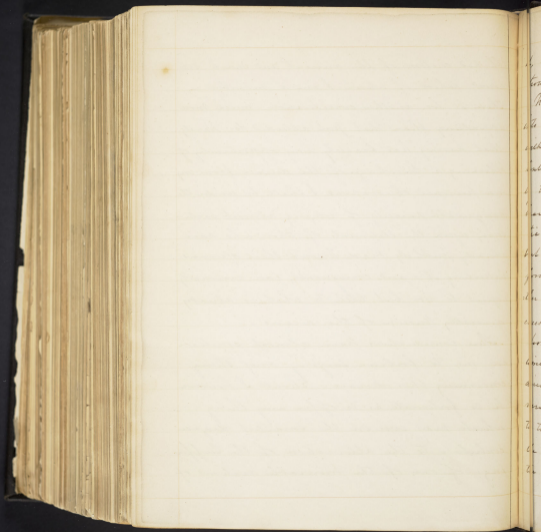


Had I the gratifying prospect of being ac-
cused to make known, to those into whose
hands this paper may hereafter chance to
fall, any discovery of importance, either as
regards the nation or treatment of this
theme, but horrid disease, this writing
would have been commenced under
those pleasing sensations, which the idea
of being about to confer a benefit on
mankind, naturally produces in the mind
of every sensitive being. But unfortunately
such is not the case, and I shall therefore
be compelled to pursue my course, with an
anticipation of till & the, as a compensa-
tion for any trouble which I may encoun-
ter, than the bare idea of knowing that
I am acting in conformance with an esta-



Albion's custom of the ancient and much re-
nowned school of which I am a member -
There is too another consideration much more
appalling than that just alluded to. Namely
that having had scarcely any opportunity of
obtaining a knowledge of the disease from my
own personal observations, I shall be under the
disagreeable necessity of relying almost exclu-
sively upon the statements of those who have
already publicly made known their opinions
respecting it - and consequently can reasonably
expect to add but little to what is already
generally known of the disease -

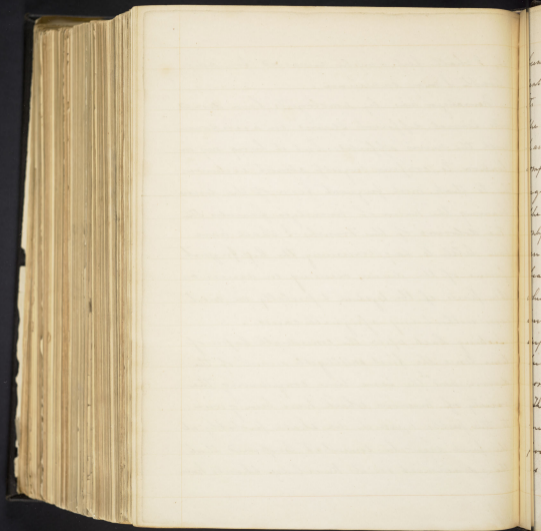
These considerations have almost constrain-
ed me to forbear saying any thing
concerning this disease. Should I however
be so fortunate as to offer any thing
which may even in the smallest degree
contribute to the alleviation of the suffer-
ings of one of the miserable victims of



th, I shall feel amply rewarded for any trouble I may experience.

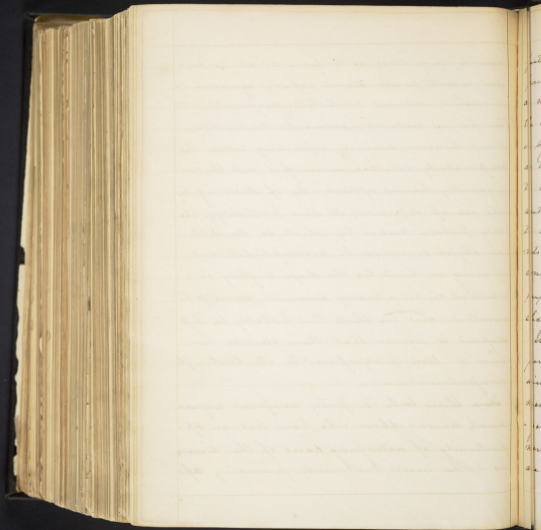
Neuralgia has, by nosologists, been divided into several different species in accordance with the nerves affected: but it being my intention to confine myself almost exclusively to that most frequent form of the disease bearing the name of neuralgia facialis the tic doloreux of the French, I shall have but little to say concerning the less frequent forms of the disease, occurring in various other parts of the system, & probably in most cases without any assignable cause.

Looking back upon the considerable lapse of time since the first intelligible account of the disease, and ^{at} the same time considering the variety of memoirs which have been given to the public upon it, we shall probably at the first view be somewhat surprised that the advancement in its knowledge should have



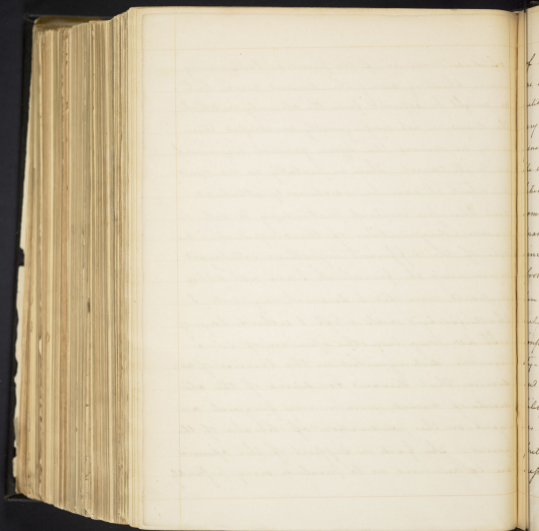
been so very slow, as to leave us at the present remote period almost entirely ignorant of its nature, and not much better acquainted with the proper mode of treatment. On the other hand, however, seriously reflecting upon the comparatively rare occurrence of it, and the consequently limited opportunity of deriving, by the aid of dissections, its true pathology, the only probable means by which so desirable an object can be accomplished, and bearing in mind too the deep mystery in which it on very many occasions seems to be involved; and we shall then probably be less disposed to wonder that there should have been a slow progression to its thorough comprehension -

There seems to be a pretty uniform agreement, among those who have had an opportunity of witnessing cases of the disease, as to the nervous condition primarily affected



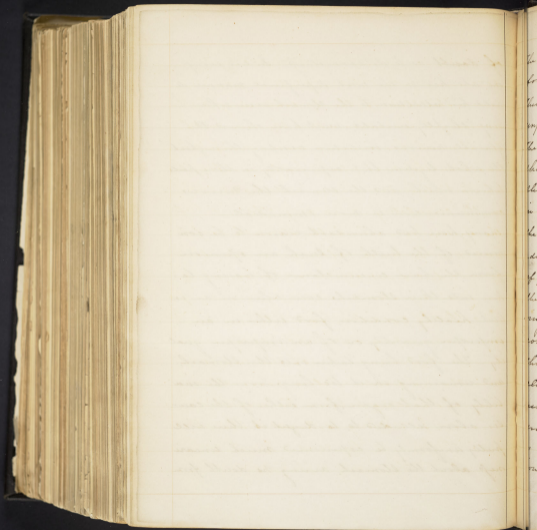
ferred, as well as of the peculiar lancinating
pain, shooting along the diseased nerve; but
as might be expected from the obscurity in which
the disease is not unfrequently enveloped there
is by no means the same general agreement
as to its cause. There is probably no one cause
to which it can be exclusively attributed -
and therefore without pretending to enter in
to any disquisition of the comparative me-
rits of the different hypotheses entertained
concerning it, for which I am not ^{at} all
prepared, even did I deem it requisite: I
shall proceed with what I intend saying.

It has long been the opinion of some
persons distinguished in the science of me-
dicine, that diseased conditions of the ali-
mentary canal, were a very frequent ac-
-gent in the production of diseases of the
nerves. The facts in support of this opinion
are so numerous, as to preclude every probability

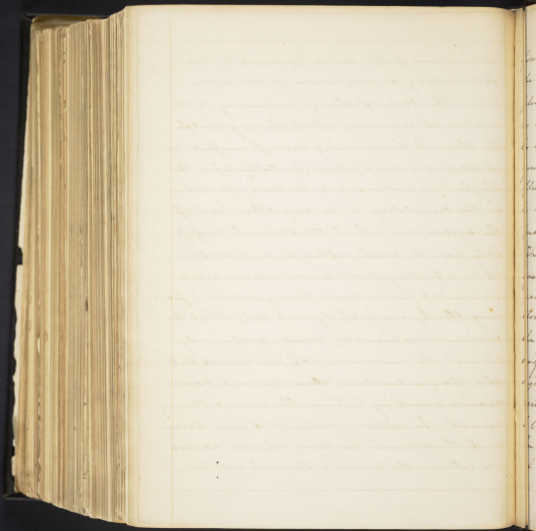


of doubt as to its correctness. Indeed every one who has in the most superficial manner directed his attention to the stomach even when very slightly irritated, must have observed the general nervous excitation existing throughout the whole system but especially in those parts between which and the stomach, the nervous communication is more immediate -

Many have had abundant reason to be convinced of the truth of such an opinion from the bare circumstance of having taken into their stomachs even when in an entirely healthy condition, food either in an improper quantity or of an improper quality - the food being taken into the stomach, and remaining in it too long from the inability of that organ from either of the causes above alluded to, to digest it there will pretty uniformly be experienced much uneasiness about the stomach, arising no doubt from

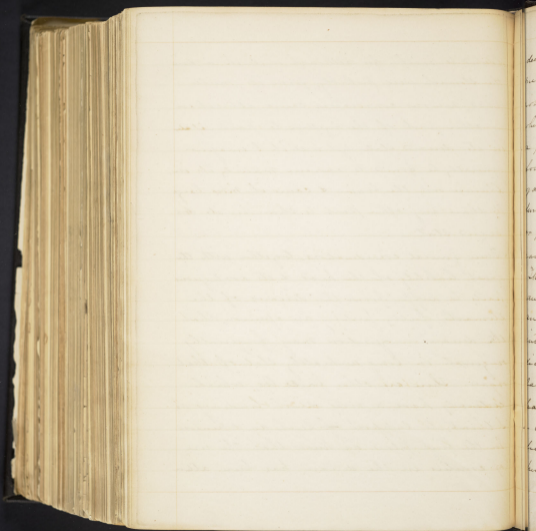


The irritation of the nerves produced by the food acting as irksome matter upon them. This state of things continuing, & the unpleasant sensations about the region of the stomach becoming more painful, we shall in the next place, probably before the slightest disturbance can be discovered either in the circulatory, or in any other part of the system, over which the stomach confessedly has so much influence, be sensible of painful sympathetic affections about the head, & parts most contiguous to it, proving thereby unequivocally, not only that the communication was made exclusively through the intervention of the nerves, but also the particularly close nervous connection existing between the brain & stomach. In the long protracted & severe diseases of the stomach, the same intimate connection between the brain & stomach will be



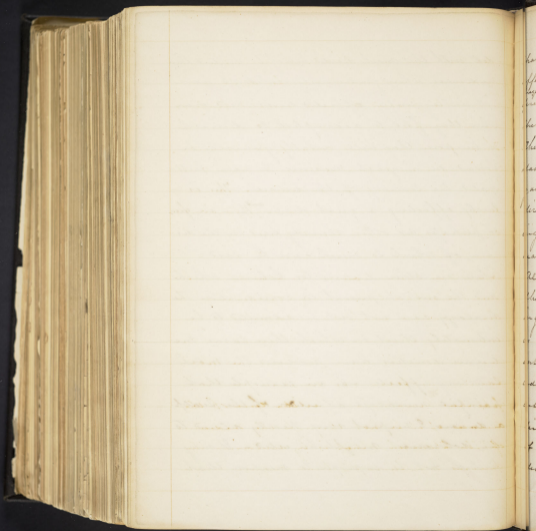
found to exist - for although in such a case the stomach will probably, from its multiplied nervous connections, cause almost every other part of the system to participate in its diseased state, yet will it I imagine generally be found to exercise mainly its influence over the brain & cause it more largely than any other part to share in its diseased state.

These general considerations, together with the great liability of the head & its contiguous parts to suffer from the diseases of the stomach, fully justify an opinion, that the disease in question may frequently originate in some unhealthy state of that organ. There are other facts too, which certainly have a very direct tendency as I think, to support of such an opinion. In the first place we know that the use of emetics in the disease, has been atten-



and with the most decided benefit. Indeed these medicines when judiciously employed have not unfrequently effected cures - and even when they fail to accomplish the desirable purpose, they will probably generally be found in a great measure to have mitigated the severity of the disease. This is - surely effecting a great deal - ^{and} there are given, or perhaps no other remedy, and in the disease, of which so much can be said.

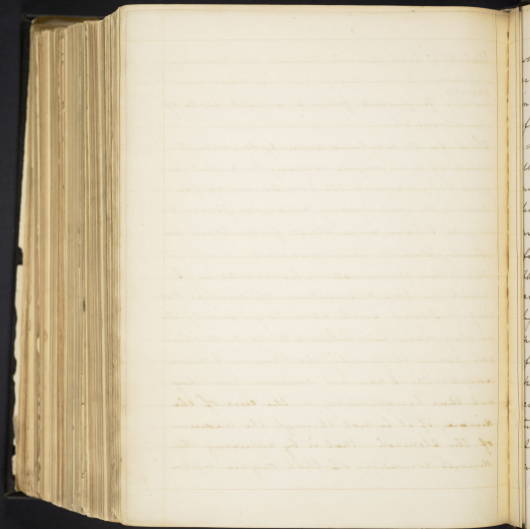
There are other diseases too between which and the one at present in consideration the analogy can not but be admitted to be intimately strict in which these same medicines sometimes have produced the most salutary effects. As an example, that painful neuralgic affection of the scalp a disease I suspect very nearly allied to his dolores. might be cited - It may perhaps not be improper to mention, that



that this last disease, namely the neuralgic
affection of the heart, can be discom-
^{frequently} directly to proceed from a vitiated state of
the stomach -

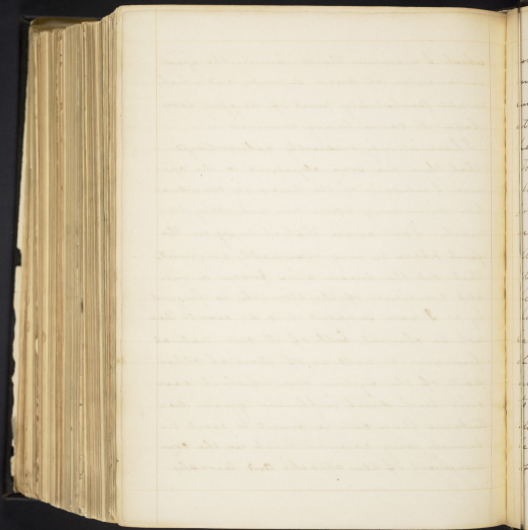
These facts combined certainly do, notwith-
standing some objections may be raised as
against it, warrant the conclusion, of the
disease on very many occasions proceed-
ing, as I have before stated, from some un-
healthy state of the stomach -

All other considerations however aside, I
think the bare circumstance of emetics, hav-
ing produced such advantageous effects,
as they have been shown to do, a suffi-
cient cause to justify the opinion I have
adopted; as I can not conceive how they
act thus beneficially in the case of the
disease, if it be not through the medium
of the stomach, - that is by removing the
diseased condition of that organ, upon

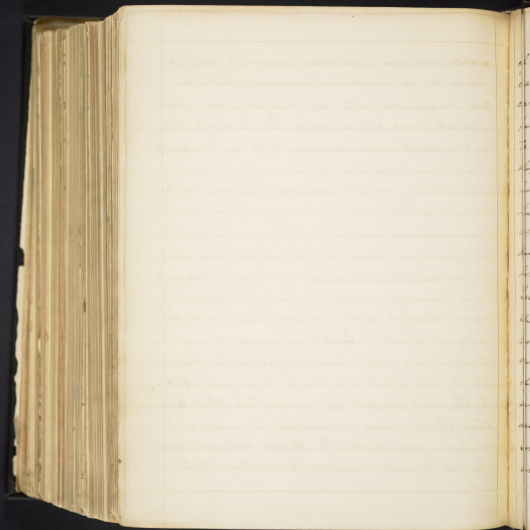


which I maintain the disease in the great
or number of cases depends; and which
in all probability must of necessity soon
fall, its cause being removed —

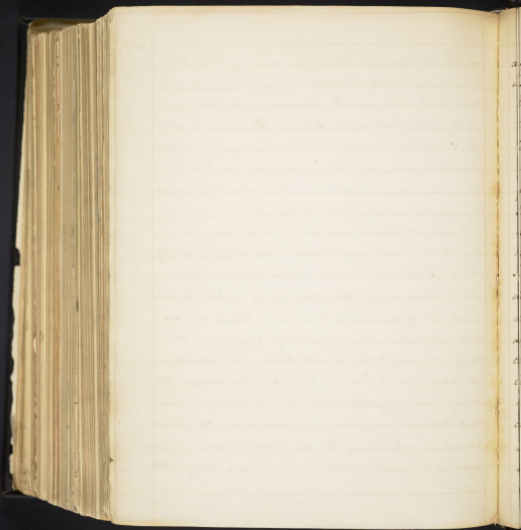
I have already indirectly acknowledged
that there are some objections to the opi-
nion I entertain of the disease in considera-
tion depending upon an unhealthy sto-
mach. I am aware that it may in the
first place be very reasonably enquired,
that did the disease arise from a vici-
ous condition of the stomach, so frequent
by as I have supposed it to be, would there
not be observed, both of its own natural
functions, as well as of those of other
parts of the system over which it exer-
cises such direct influence, greater dis-
turbance than can be found to exist in
scarcely any case, at least in the com-
monment of the attack and secondly —



would not the remedies, directed to the stomach, as a medium through which a cure might probably be effected, have been attended with more uniform success, than has hitherto been discovered to be the case. To the first of these I can only reply, that there probably will in the greater proportion of cases of the disease, upon close examination, be discovered symptoms of a stomach in some way deranged; and that the cause why this state of things has not been more generally noticed by those who have witnessed, & written on the disease, probably is, that their attention of many of them has not been sufficiently directed to the state of that organ. And to the last it will be remembered, that although on many occasions, it may not be an easy matter to decide between causes of the disease arising from the state

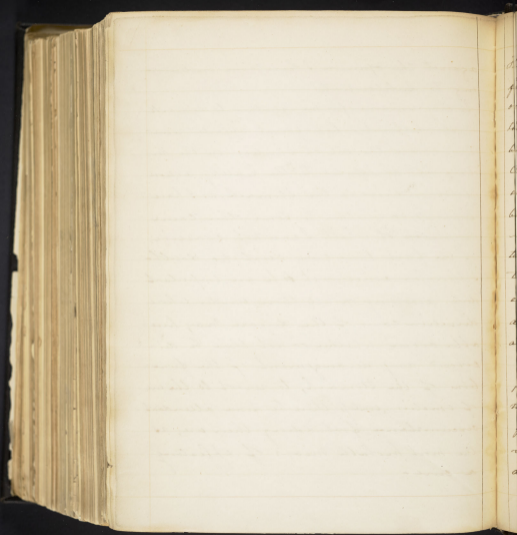


of the Stomach, & such as arise from other causes, yet do I admit that such is the case, and consequently it can not but be expected that emetics should sometimes fail to do good. I moreover think it quite probable, that one very great cause of the failure of the remedy is this - that emetics being exceedingly unpleasant in their operations, there are few who can be induced to continue their use sufficiently long, fairly to test their efficacy - In addition to all this it is well known that it frequently happens that we do not succeed in relieving the most obstinate disordered Stomach after the exertion of all our skill, & the application of every remedy deemed most appropriate; and consequently, the circumstances of emetics sometimes failing to do good in the disease under consideration will argue very little



against the opinion I have been endeavoring to substantiate.

It only remains for me further to remark that whether the beneficial effects, resulting from the use of emetics in the disease can be attributed to the healthy action first induced in the stomach as I have supposed, or whether to some other cause of which I can not conceive, of the fact there can exist no doubt. I therefore conceive it to be an important duty devolving on all those, under whose direction cases of the disease may hereafter occur, whether or not there be discovered any derangement of the functions of the stomach, to resort to the use of emetics, unless there be some attendant circumstance forbidding their use, as the most probable means of effecting a cure.

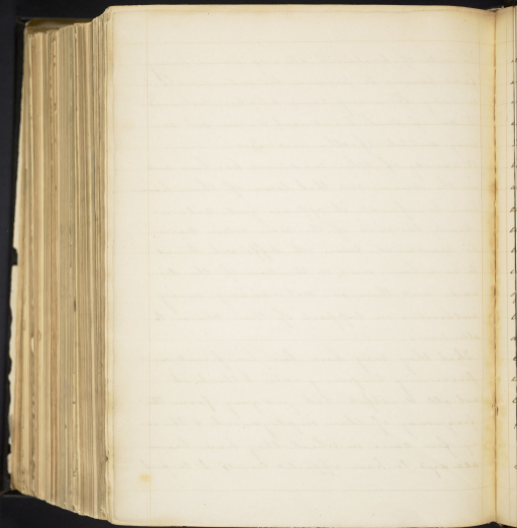


The mode of treatment already adopted, having failed however to produce the intended effect, or being from any cause whatever restrained the use of such treatment, we are not unwillingly desist of other resources.

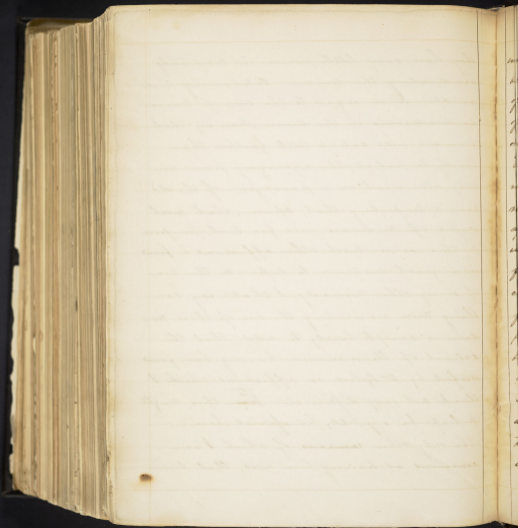
A variety of other medicines has been used in the disease, and that some of them have been beneficial, it appears quite certain.

Nearly the whole of the more active narcotic medicines, seems at different times to have been used in the cure of the disease, and there are not wanting many authorities in support of their claim to attention.

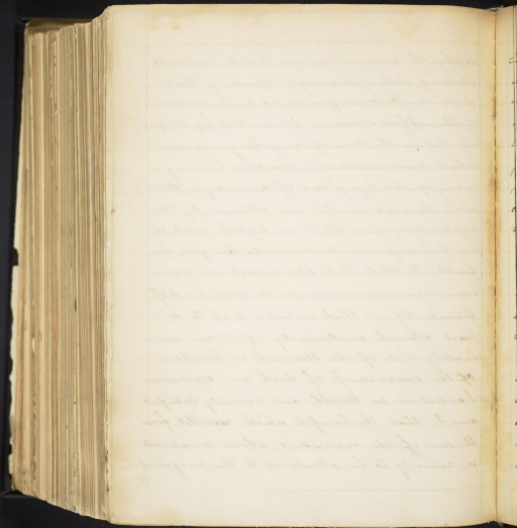
That they may have been beneficial in procuring temporary ease, I think it not all doubtful: but judging from the frequency of their employment, & the very few cases in which they have been always to have effected cures, I suspect



they have very little power in completely
eraduating the disease. Entertaining such
an opinion in regard to the use of Narcot-
ic medicines in the disease, namely that
their use will extend little farther than
barely to palliate the agonizing pain usu-
ally attendant on a paroxysm of the dis-
ease, & supposing that opium, that most
useful of medicines will for such purpose
in this, as in most other affections be found
in a great measure to supersede the use
of every other remedy. I shall say no-
thing more concerning the use of these me-
dicines, except barely to add, that the
extract of thamonium having been found
useful by Dr. Gibson in affections, which I
think not very dissimilar ~~from~~^{to} this, might
perhaps be equally beneficial here—
The only other remedies of which I am
conscious as having been used, that have



worthy of any notice are local instances
bleeding both generally & locally, some
of the martial preparations, & the division
of the affected nerve. We are told by Dr. Grey
say, that in the case of a young woman
which came under his direction, bearing
many of the symptoms of neuralgia, the
most decided benefit was obtained by the
application of a blute &c, together with the
use of purgative medicines. He goes on
further to state that this is not an un-
common occurrence in the early part of
female life, & that he believes it to de-
pend almost exclusively upon an un-
healthy state of the stomach, or bowels -
Of the correctness of such an opinion
I entertain no doubt, and equally satisfied
am I, that the benefit, which resulted from
the use of the remedies above mentioned
is mainly to be attributed to the purgatives



Bleeding general & local has been practiced under the idea that the disease depends upon an increased circulation in the vessels of the brain. Should such a state of things be ascertained to exist, the plan of treatment just mentioned would certainly be very appropriate. This however I suspect is rarely the case, and bleeding probably ought not to be ranked among the remedies of the disease.

Tonics as I before mentioned, have also been used here. There is however by no means a general concurrence of opinion as respects their use - some of the most distinguished physicians considering them as having scarcely any claim what ever to attention, while others, whose opinions are certainly entitled to respect, speak of their decided utility in the most unequivocal manner. To reconcile such contrariety of opinion, may appear some-

what difficult, though my own experience inclines me to the adoption of the latter opinion. Certain I am that some ^{one} of these medicines has occasionally produced much advantage, but to what particular cause of the disease it is best adapted I am unable to say - perhaps to those cases in which great debility exists, whether original, or brought on by the more active means of cure.

The medicine to which I have just alluded, the Carbon of Iron, ~~undoubtedly~~ did, in the only case in which I have ever seen it used, produce the most decided advantage. This was the case of an aged lady, who being extremely feeble & delicate & having no symptoms of disease, save that of the affected nerve, was directed to use the iron 20^{or} 20 gr doses several times a day -

This however proving insufficient to arrest the disease, the dose was gradually

increased to double the quantity, when all the symptoms disappeared. In this state the patient remained free from all pain, until, after a considerable lapse of time, being from some cause much excited, the disease returned with all its former violence. The brom was again immediately resorted to in similar doses & with the same good effect.

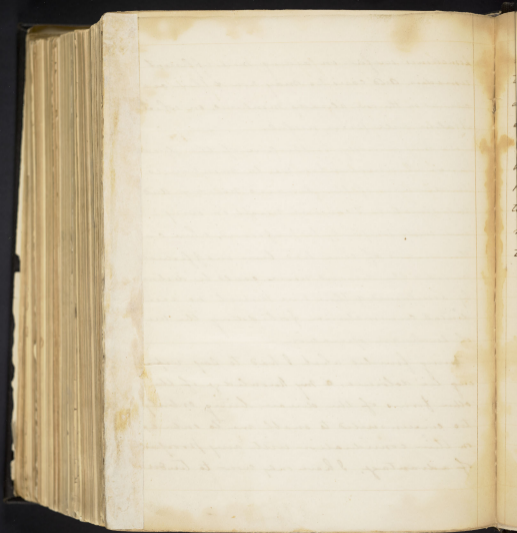
Several other cases have also lately been reported to me, in which this medicine was used with the same good effect. Of the circumstances attending these cases however I know nothing, and have only noticed them with a view of attracting attention to the use of the remedy.

It will readily be imagined from what I have previously said, that I should by no means be disposed to rely upon it as an exclusive remedy, though it may

sometimes useful in aiding more efficient remedies. And cases too may now & then occur, as in the one already mentioned, in which it alone will prove useful.

The only remedy in the cure of the disease which it remains for me to mention, is the division of the diseased nerve - And this operation I conceive might, in every case with propriety be performed, where other means of cure had been ineffectual: provided the diseased nerve could be distinctly ascertained, & there were present no accidental circumstances forbidding the use of such an operation -

Having furnished what I had to say respecting the disease, & my knowledge of the other forms of the disease being entirely too circumscribed to enable me to enter upon their consideration with any prospect of advantage, I have only now to tender



my thanks to the professors for the oppor-
tunities, which they have so graciously affor-
ded me of profiting by their lectures, & to
express a hope that the time may ere
long arrive when some one of the mem-
bers of their school shall distinguish
himself by disclosing the now obscure pa-
thology of this disease, & adopting a
more rational mode of treatment.
Thine

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